

CANADIAN PACIFIC RAILWAY

# BROOKS SUBDIVISION

- PART 1 - MEDICINE HAT TO BROOKS, ALBERTA -

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The Canadian Pacific Railway built the transcontinental main line across the dryland prairie east of Calgary in 1883. To attract settlers to farm the area, early in the 20<sup>th</sup> century the CPR built major irrigation works to render the land from Tilley to Calgary suitable for farming, such as the Brooks Aqueduct seen above on 10 Oct 2009. The arrival of farm settlers mandated the construction of grain elevators throughout the area; this generated grain traffic for the railway. Today, grain, potash, chemical, intermodal, lumber and general merchandise dominate the railway traffic on the main line from Medicine Hat to Calgary, known as the Brooks Subdivision.

## BEFORE THE RAILWAY



Before the railway came to the prairie, the land looked like this; animal trails on the treeless rolling plains such as this near Gleichen, on the Blackfoot tribal lands; image taken 10 Oct 2009 after a light snowfall. Much of the area not under irrigation still looks like this.

## BROOKS SUBDIVISION 1886 TIME TABLE <sup>(1)</sup>

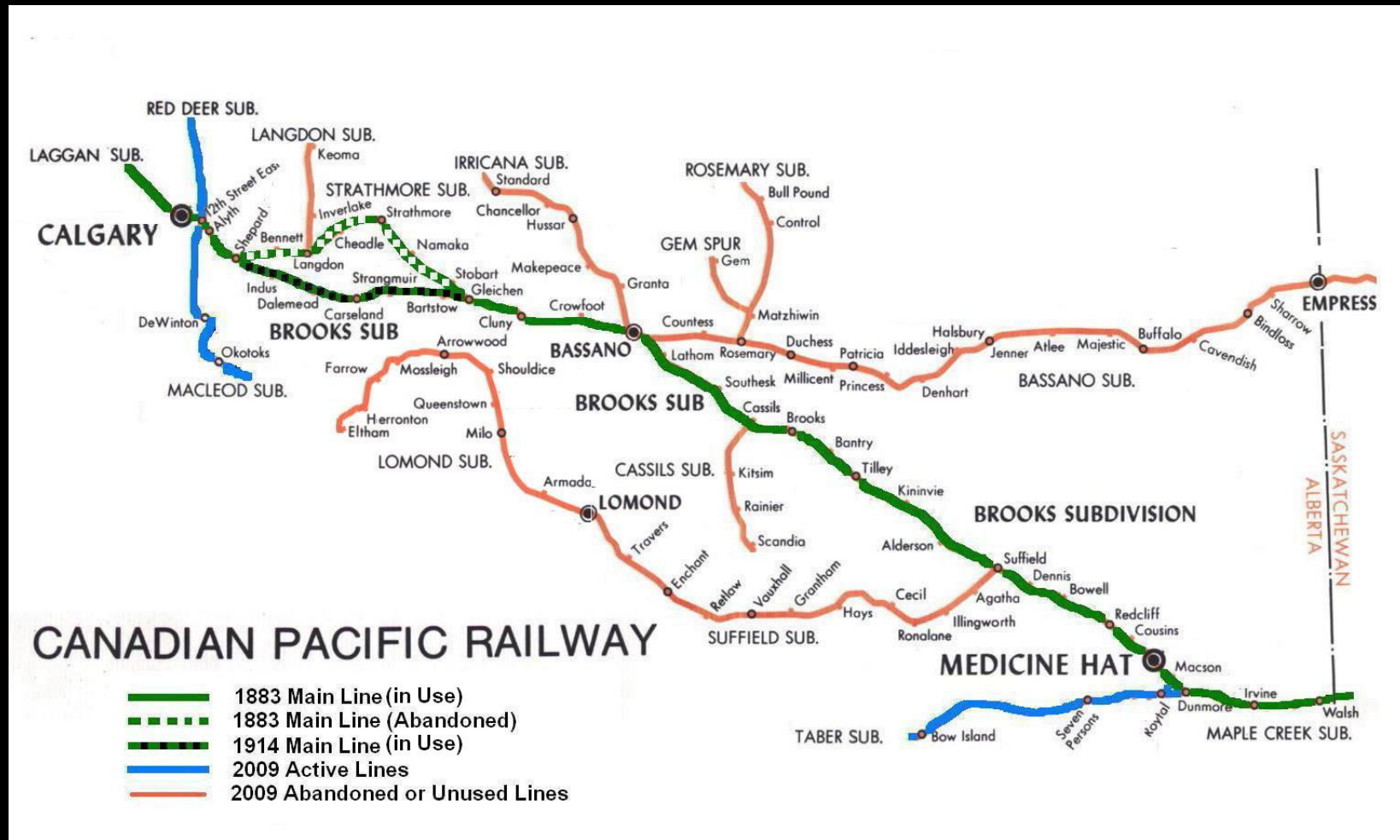
Siding No.	Station
	<b>MEDICINE HAT</b>
1	Stair
2	Bowell
3	Suffield
4	Langevin
5	Kininvie
6	Tilley
7	Bantry
8	Cassils
9	Southesk
10	Lathom
11	Bassano
12	Crowfoot
13	Cluny
14	<b>GLEICHEN</b>
15	Namaka
16	Strathmore
17	Cheadle
18	Langdon
19	Shepard
20	Calgary

The construction of the Canadian Pacific trans-continental main line reached Medicine Hat on 31 May 1883. After crossing the South Saskatchewan River, the contractors were in dry grassland and in gently rolling terrain further west and were therefore able to make rapid progress towards Calgary which was reached only 71 days later (including the completion of a bridge over the Bow River), on 10 August 1883. The average track laid was 2.53 miles per day to complete the entire 180 miles of what is today known as the Brooks Subdivision. The original divisional points were Medicine Hat and Gleichen; Gleichen was later abandoned as a divisional point in favour of Calgary. Each siding west of Medicine Hat was given a number before it was named (see table).

The section Medicine Hat to Langevin was in the Assiniboia District of the North West Territories; Kininvie to Calgary was in the Alberta District of the North West Territories; the whole of the Brooks Subdivision was in Alberta when it became a Province in 1905.

The 1883 built section from Gleichen to Shepard was replaced as main line in 1914 with a southern route through Strangmuir, Carseland, Dalemead and Indus; the northern route became known as the Strathmore Subdivision until it was abandoned in 1992. Namaka, Strathmore, Cheadle and Langdon were therefore no longer on the main.

## CPR SUBDIVISIONS 1883 – 2009 <sup>(1)</sup>



Except for the 46 miles between gleichen & Shepard, which were replaced in 1914 with a 41-mile more southerly route, the CP main line has changed little since it was built in 1883; the branch lines that were built in the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century have virtually all disappeared 100 years later as have most of the traditional wood crib grain elevators and railway stations along those lines.

## BROOKS SUBDIVISION 2009 TIME TABLE <sup>(2)</sup>

Mile	2009	Notes
0.0	<b>MEDICINE HAT</b>	Division Point & yard
3.0	Cousins & Redcliff Spurs	Industrial spurs
6.8	Redcliff	Passing track and storage tracks
15.1	Bowell	Passing siding
25.8	Suffield	Passing siding plus storage tracks
35.3	Alderson	Originally named Langevin, Carlstadt
44.4	Kininvie	Passing siding
52.9	Tilley	Not in 2009 Time Table, storage tracks
54.5	Bantry	Passing siding
62.2	Monogram	Passing siding
66.8	Brooks	Not in 2009 Time Table, small yard
73.6	Cassils	Passing siding & small yard
89.8	Lathom	Passing siding & storage track
97.6	Bassano	Yard; wye; junction with Irricana Spur
105.3	Crowfoot	Passing siding
117.2	Cluny	Passing siding
124.7	Gleichen	Passing siding & storage track
139.0	Strangmuir	Passing siding & storage track
144.4	Carseland	Start double track; storage track
149.5	West Carseland	Double track; wye with small yard on spur
150.8	Bennett	Double Crossovers
153.7	Dalemead	End double track
158.8	Indus	Not in 2009 Time Table, storage track
165.6	Shepard	Start double track & Intermodal Terminal
167.6	Murdoch	Double Crossovers
169.8	Glenmore	End double track
171.1	Ogden	Siding and major repair shops
173.3	Alyth	Major classification yard & engine terminal
174.5	12 <sup>th</sup> Street East	Tower; jct with Red Deer & MacLeod Subs.
175.8	<b>CALGARY</b>	Division Point & Terminal Tracks

Except for the section from Gleichen to Shepard, the time table for the Brooks Subdivision has not changed much since it was constructed in 1883. Some villages, such as Tilley, Brooks and Indus no longer appear but are still extant; Brooks for example became a city in 2005 with a population today of about 13,000. The railway has generally constructed passing sidings outside of the communities (Monogram, east of Brooks; Bantry, west of Tilley; West Carseland, west of Carseland) so as not to block level road crossings while trains wait for meets.

The passing sidings on the Brooks Subdivision range from 7,100 feet at Strangmuir to 8,300 feet at Bowell. At Kininvie and Gleichen, the sidings were extended to over 10,000 feet as part of CPR's 2005 Western Capacity Improvement program. Under the same program, the track from Carseland to Dalemead was double-tracked with double crossovers at Bennett; double track was extended from Shepard to Glenmore with double crossovers at Murdoch.

## M 0.0 - MEDICINE HAT



The Medicine Hat Divisional Point is marked by this remarkable station built in 1906 and still used today for railway purposes, but no longer for passenger services, which ended with the demise of 'THE CANADIAN' on the southern (CPR) route in January of 1990.

It is a National Historic Site. Image 22 Apr 2009

## M 0.0 - MEDICINE HAT



After traversing the whole 175 miles from Calgary on the Brooks Subdivision, CPR 8859 (8709) EAST intermodal service stops at the divisional station at Medicine Hat, Alberta, for a crew change on 22 Apr 2009 before heading east on the Maple Creek Subdivision.

## M 0.0 - MEDICINE HAT



The grades on the Brooks Subdivision are remarkably flat except for the grade coming out of the South Saskatchewan River Valley (above on 22 Apr 2009) from Medicine Hat heading west, which is the ruling grade on the Brooks Subdivision.



## M 15 - BOWELL



From Medicine Hat to Brooks, the terrain is arid, treeless, flat prairie; the passing sidings such as Suffield & Alderson look similar to this image of CP 9831 (9801) manifest freight EBD at Bowell East at M 14.3 on a dreary spring day. Two grain elevators were built here: a Wheatland Elevator in 1914 & an Alberta Wheat Pool elevator in 1929; they were demolished by 1939<sup>(3)</sup>. Image 22 Apr 2009

## M 25 SUFFIELD



At Suffield a 147 mile branch line was built between 1913-1930 to Lomond and from Lomond to Eltham (Suffield & Lomond Subs); abandoned 1996-2002. The only structures remaining on this line are the 3 elevators & coal shed (above) built in 1930 at Mossleigh; 2 each at Arrowwood & Milo; a UGG elevator at Farrow and an Alberta Wheat Pool elevator at Herronton. Image 10 Jun 2008.

## M 25 SUFFIELD – LOMOND SUBDIVISIONS



At various locations, the CPR would deliver coal to the coal shed in a community. The sheds were located along the grain elevator spur as seen here at Mossleigh on the Lomond Subdivision on 05 May 2009. Note how the four bin doors are elevated to the height of a railway car; the bin doors on the other side are at ground level to allow shoveling of the coal into horse-drawn farm wagons.

## M 25 SUFFIELD – LOMOND SUBDIVISIONS



When the Canadian Pacific Railway hired agents to promote the migration of farm settlers from Europe to Western Canada, it was probably to their advantage not to show photographs like this of the prairie in winter; migrants might have had second thoughts? Image: United Grain Growers elevator (Jan 2009) built in 1930 at Farrow, closed in 1977, M 10 Lomond Subdivision (abandoned).<sup>(3)</sup>

## M 44 - KININVIE



A westbound CP Intermodal stays on the main line as it crosses the switch at Kininvie East at M 43.5 in a fall blizzard on 10 Oct 2009. Kininvie is located in the Kininvie Blocks, a 160 quarter section area of original native prairie grass, home of antelope and the endangered burrowing owl. The siding at Kininvie was extended from 7,400 to 10,006 feet as part of the 2005 Western Cap project.

## M 52 – TILLEY



The Village of Tilley is typical of small town rural Alberta; with a wide Main Street, seen here on 10 Oct 2009, and a Railway Avenue. With a population of 442, Tilley, along with 12 other towns on the Brooks Sub., had a CPR railway station; all are gone today except the stations at Medicine Hat and Bassano. The farms surrounding Tilley are served by the irrigation water from the CP Bassano Dam.

## M 52 – TILLEY



The typical small rural towns, villages and hamlets along the Brooks Subdivision and its branch lines usually had a railway station, a hotel and a bank along with a few grain elevators. The 100 year old Tilley Hotel (left) is typical as is the impressive century old Canadian Bank of Commerce in Gleichen at M 124. The remainder of the main street had businesses serving the farmers in the area.

Images: 10 Oct 2009

## M 52 – TILLEY



The sidings at Tilley, AB., M 52.9 Brooks Subdivision, once used for loading grain cars at the 2 elevators located here, now house stored bulkhead cars as seen here on 10 Oct 2009. An Alberta Wheat Pool elevator was built here in 1932 as was an Ogilvie Flour Mill in 1937.<sup>(3)</sup> The wooden grain elevators that used to dot the landscape have been replaced by high capacity concrete terminals.



## M 54 – BANTRY



Bantry is an 8,345 foot long passing siding at M 54.5, on the west side of Tilley. Here, five CP locomotives, CP 9671, 3040, 8509, 6615 & 5874, pull a mixed manifest freight eastbound out of the siding at Bantry East, M 53.7, after a meet with a westbound intermodal.

Image 10 Oct 2009

## M 62 – MONOGRAM



CPR 9763 is the rear Distributed Power Unit on 128 platform IMS 9705 EAST as it passes the signals in the snow at Monogram West, M 63.0 Brooks Sub., on 10 Oct 2009. Monogram is a 7,701 foot long passing siding about 500 feet east of where the CPR main line crosses the Brooks Aqueduct. Monogram has never had a station or grain elevators; these were at Brooks, 4 miles west at M 66.8.

## M 63.1 – BROOKS AQUEDUCT



The CPR built the Brooks Aqueduct (west side seen here on 10 Oct 2009) between 1911 and 1914 to carry irrigation water from the Bassano Dam across this valley east of Brooks to the Millicent, Tilley & Patricia areas. The aqueduct is 2 miles long and 61 feet high. It was taken over by the Eastern Irrigation District in 1935; it was replaced in 1979 by a raised earthen embankment with a canal.

## M 63.1 – BROOKS AQUEDUCT



The eastern portion of the Brooks Aqueduct on 10 Oct 2009; the irrigation water flowed in the half-round steel lined concrete flume supported by the concrete pillars. To the right of the large tree the inverted portion of the aqueduct can be seen, where a concrete pipe carried the 640 cubic feet per second of water under the CPR main line. The aqueduct is a National Historic Site (since 1983).

## M 63.1 – BROOKS AQUEDUCT



CPR 9705 (8625, mid-train DPU 8571, 9763 rear DPU) eastbound with 128 platforms crosses the inverted section of the 1914 Brooks Aqueduct at M 63.1 as it approaches Monogram West, M 63.0 Brooks Subdivision, on 10 Oct 2009. The aqueduct carried irrigation water to over 60,000 acres east of this location, as far east as Tilley; at the time it was the longest structure of this kind in the world.

## M 66.8 – BROOKS



The Brooks station is no longer listed in the CPR timetable but the yard is still in use. Here the Bassano wayfreight with SD40-2 # 5866 has just arrived from Medicine Hat on 16 Oct 2009 and is about to start lifting and spotting cars in the yard; the dimensional load is spotted. When the yard switching work is complete, the wayfreight will leave Brooks with 13 cars and head west for Bassano.

## M 66.8 – BROOKS



The Hotel Newell on 2<sup>nd</sup> Street West and 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue West in Brooks, over a century old, was undoubtedly a favourite watering hole for railway crews after the end of a shift as it is only a few steps from where the railway station was once located. The City of Brooks, as well as the Brooks Subdivision, was named in 1904 after Noel Edgell Brooks, a CPR Divisional Engineer from Calgary. 16 Oct 2009

#### References:

1. CPR 1886 Time Table and Brooks Subdivision Map Base from Atlas of Alberta Railways, University of Alberta Press 2005  
<http://railways-atlas.tapor.ualberta.ca/cocoon/atlas/>
2. Canadian Trackside Guide, Bytown Railway Society, 1994 and 2008 Editions, <http://www.bytownrailwaysociety.ca>
3. All grain elevator construction and closing data from: Vanishing Sentinels, Jim Pearson, Delia, Alberta, 2007, available as a publication from Jim Pearson and at selected bookstores or at: [http://web.mac.com/difdbs/Vanishing\\_Sentinels/Home.html](http://web.mac.com/difdbs/Vanishing_Sentinels/Home.html); used with permission.
4. Eastern Irrigation District, Brooks, Alberta <http://www.eid.ab.ca/Brochures.htm>
5. All PART 1 digital images by the author 2007-2009

#### Note re station names:

There were a few station names on the CPR that appeared at various locations and times, mostly on the eastern end of the Brooks Subdivision, such as 'Stair' 'Dennis', 'Bartstow' and 'Leckie', that so far have defied further description; whether these were just passenger 'whistle stops' for a time and then fell out of use, or whether their names were changed at some time is not known; the author was unable to find any information about these locations.